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The History of Salvation IV

Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

The Real Problems of the American Church

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IT SEEMS TO ME

Looking Ahead

Promulgating the conciliar documents on Revelation and the Lay Apostolate, Pope Paul discussed the direction and spirit required for Church renewal in the immediate future. He recalled the three great movements in the rhythm of Vatican II, three acts of a drama that has caught world attention.

First, there was the widespread enthusiasm, though not unanimous, at Pope John's announcement of the Council and for his confident optimism in its limitless potential. For its realization Pope John offered his excruciating last illness and death.

Then came the four years of the Council itself. A host of bishops, theologians, writers, clergy and faithful were given a long-deferred forum. Some fought conscientiously for waning visions and outmoded methods. However, a striking consensus emerged calling for legitimate imperative change. This grew out of honest confrontation with the momentous problems of reform in the Church itself in *our* world. From embarrassing questions and forthright criticism, wise solutions came gradually through prayer, study and discussion.

The third stage is now upon us, the concluding act of a divine-human drama which, in Pope Paul's view, is "that of ideas and plans, of acceptance and execution of the conciliar decrees." Assisting the new norms "there is a new element, that of ecclesiastical communion, of its marvelous structure, of the greater charity which should unify, vivify and sanctify the hierarchical communion of the Church."

The Pope made it clear that he is sincerely determined to carry through the renewal envisioned by Pope John and specified by the Ecumenical Council. He is at the helm and, aided by new commissions, secretariats and the synod of bishops in the new spirit of communion and charity, he proposes to guide the Church in the fateful years ahead. With God's help and the understanding, united support of God's people, he hopes to effect momentous changes that are orderly, accepted and gradual.

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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The History of Salvation IV

Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

(THE LAYMAN AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS, SEE PP. 17-18)

When Moses taught the Israelites what had prompted Yahweh to enter their lives the way he did, the things that were happening to them began to make sense. They could begin to see that their rescue from Egypt wasn't something Yahweh did just out of the blue. There was a reason for it, and somehow it was tied up with his dealings with their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These dealings, in turn, were tied up with something that had happened way back at the dawn of the human race. And now, somehow, the whole Israelite people were caught up in this whole process. Not only was Israel connected with what had happened in the past, but looking at the covenant Yahweh had made with them, his people could see that the end was not yet. There was a future to be worked out and they were very much a part of it.

Naturally, at that time, none of these things were very clearly understood. But the Israelites did have some sense of being caught up in God's plans for men and sensed that they were at the center of whatever it was that Yahweh was doing. They had this word for this.

Now that Yahweh had made a covenant with a whole people, religion became

a little more complicated than the simple person-to-person relationship we saw in the case of Abraham. Yahweh's people were now a social group, and this meant that there was a whole network of relationships among themselves that had to be worked out and related to the basic charter of the nation, i.e., the covenant. The ten commandments formed the basic law of Israel, but they had to be filled out with a whole set of other laws so that the life of the people might be organized and administered in orderly fashion. Thus the basic books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) contain the property and criminal laws of the nation, rules of worship and sacrifice, regulations about health and marriage. All of these were tied in with the covenant and the commandments given by Yahweh, so that the people could see that their whole life was a living out of the covenant and

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Your candid comments will be appreciated, so that revisions will benefit by your opinions and suggestions.

that everything they did was of concern to Yahweh.

People, however, don't change overnight, and the Israelites were no exception. It wasn't long after the first enthusiastic acceptance of the covenant that they grew restless and dissatisfied. They even went so far as to make idols for themselves and to worship these instead of Yahweh. So, Yahweh began the long process of leading his people through trial and suffering that would gradually purify them and confirm their faith. He kept them in the desert for a whole generation, toughening and disciplining them until they forgot about the fleshpots of Egypt. We don't have to look very far to see how important this kind of purification still is for the Christian. It is still necessary for him to discipline himself in order to be faithful to God and keep the attraction of material things down to size.

ISRAEL'S HOMELAND

At length, the Israelites completed their wanderings and enter the land of Chanaan, the place where Abraham had been led by Yahweh centuries before. They were home and Yahweh had kept his promises. However, before they could settle down and build cities it was necessary to clear out the pagan tribes that had settled there during their long absence. For the next two hundred years, Israel was at war off and on with these people until finally all of the land of their fathers was re-conquered and they could settle down and build a permanent home. Once they got established they set up a kingdom and found a king for themselves, and for a while, stability and order reigned.

I am going to pass over the details of Israel's history because there isn't time to go into them. The best way to learn about all that happened is to read the Bible account, and I refer you in particular to the Books of Kings.

Suffice it to say, that at this point in history, you will notice that all of Yahweh's promises to Abraham have been fulfilled. His descendants have become a great nation, at least one that has an identity of its own and the respect and fear of its neigh-

bors. They have a sizeable land of their own. Yahweh is their God and gives them protection, prosperity and other signs of his blessing. This, in substance, was what he promised Abraham, and now he has kept his promise. However, there was a good deal more to these promises than Abraham and his descendants realized. Yahweh planned to make of his people a still greater society and give them a new kind of kingdom and be their father and friend in a way that they could not imagine. Least they think that what they had already received was all there was to it, Yahweh now opened the door a little further and promised to David, the greatest of their kings, something greater.

► Reading from 2 Kings 7:4-17.

Yahweh promises that David's descendants will reign forever in the kingdom that he will establish, and he, Yahweh, will be a father to them. David probably thought this meant the kind of kingdom they had at that time, but looking back, we know that it refers to the kingdom 'not of this world' that Jesus Christ established some 800 years later. The gospels are careful to remind us that Jesus is the descendant of David.

The story of Israel is really the story of how Yahweh's people lived the covenant they had made with him. According to its terms, Yahweh would bless and protect them, and this he did as long as they kept the covenant. He established them in the land of their fathers, strengthened them in battle, and protected them against their enemies. But Israel was not faithful to the covenant. They constantly forgot Yahweh, forgot who it was that had done all of these things for them. They broke his commandments and brought in the false gods of their idolatrous neighbors and worshiped them. They intrigued in politics with their pagan neighbors and got involved in their wars and conquests. The rulers of Israel took advantage of their own people, and poverty and injustice and oppression were common. Worship of Yahweh became a mechanical thing, animals were offered in sacrifice without any genuine spirit of sacrifice. When these things happened Yahweh sent prophets to call the people to repentance, to remind them of the covenant, and to to

warn them of the disasters that would follow if they did not mend their ways and return to the covenant.

► Readings from Jeremiah 5:1-30.

Only rarely did they respond to this kind of preaching. More often they persecuted the prophets and even put them to death. As a result, Yahweh withdrew his protection and let them suffer the consequences. They were defeated in war, suffered famine and disease. When they repented and recognized their failures and asked his forgiveness, Yahweh always took them back, renewed his protection and blessing, and they prospered once again.

However, the history of the kingdom is one of decline. After Solomon, the royal family split into factions and there was constant fighting over succession to the throne. Things got so bad that the nation was split and became two kingdoms — Israel and Judah. Now Yahweh's people were not only at war with their neighbors but with each other. Things went from bad to worse and the voice of the prophets grew more ominous, but they received little attention. Finally, the Babylonians destroyed both kingdoms, slaughtered most of the people, and shipped the rest off into exile in Babylon.

FAITHFUL YAHWEH

However, even though Israel was unfaithful to the covenant, Yahweh was not. He kept his promises and did not abandon his people even in their abandonment of him. He sent his prophets to them in exile and promised that after a period of trial and purification he would restore them to their land and make of them a new and better nation.

► Reading from Jeremiah 31:23-34.

Jeremiah here indicates that something new is coming. Yahweh will not only forgive his people but he will make a new covenant with them and give them a law they will find in their hearts. Again, looking back, we can see that this refers to the law of love that Jesus later gave to the people.

During these years of exile Yahweh turns the eyes of his people toward the future, to that time when his chosen one, his Messiah, will come and establish the kingdom forever.

► Reading from Isaiah 11 and 12.

This is the picture that Isaiah paints of the new Kingdom and the Messiah-king who will rule it. Everything is perfect and peace and security is everywhere. But there will be a price to pay for this in pain and suffering, and it will be the task of the Messiah to pay this price.

► Reading from Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

After about 70 years of exile Yahweh kept his promise and what was left of Israel was returned to the homeland. They were a chastened lot now, poorer but wiser for their experience, and the community they established in Jerusalem now was a more spiritual and humble one than the proud and arrogant kingdom that has been destroyed. The temple was rebuilt and the law of Moses was obeyed once again. The stage was now set and everything ready for the decisive action of Yahweh that would begin the kingdom of heaven. It had been a long hard period of preparation and the Israelites had learned their lesson painfully and imperfectly, but now there was, at least, a small group of men who were ready to receive the greatest of all God's gifts — his Son. He could now come with a fair chance of being heard and accepted by his own people.

In the long history of Israel there were a few basic things which Yahweh hammered home to his people. The most important is the fact that he is God, and that there are no other gods besides him.

► Reading from Deut. 6:4-15.

Yahweh taught them this not only through the words of Moses, but much more drastically through the events of Israel's history. We learn as much from experience in life as we do in school. The same was true of Israel. We have seen how they had a tendency to forget the things Moses taught them and that the lasting lessons came from what happened

when they broke the covenant. Throughout the history of Israel Yahweh had many dealings with his people. In those events of war and peace, exile and rescue, Israel learned what their God was like. He *revealed* himself in what he did for them and they learned that he was the one true God from the disasters that befell them when they chased after other gods. They learned, too, that he was patient, loving and faithful to his promises.

So, like Abraham, the Israelites came to know their God in the things he did. In these events, Yahweh continued to *promise* something. He repeated the promises made to their forefathers. He carried out these promises literally, and then he promised

them more, — a whole new and more wonderful development in man's life with God.

Finally, he continued to *demand* their faith and obedience. They were to have no other gods and they were to observe faithfully the commandments he had given them and all of the terms of the covenant. Their life, their future, and everything else depended on this.

Somehow, in spite of the many failures of Israel, Yahweh got them through everything and after almost 2000 years he had a small community, tried and ready, for the next and most crucial phase in his plan. This phase was nothing less than the complete reconciliation of man to God.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

How did their religion affect the everyday life of the Israelites?
What does the history of Israel teach us about human nature?
What makes idol worship so wrong?
What kinds of idolatry are practised today?
Why is hope something religious?
Why was Jesus so long in coming?
In what ways does God teach his people today?

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The Real Problems of the American Church

Andrew M. Greeley

A SOCIOLOGIST LOOKS AT RENEWAL

If we are to believe certain commentators, things are getting progressively worse in the American Church. We are told that more and more Catholics are going through "crisis of faith." We are warned that there is a revolt against the "conspiracy of silence." We are informed that the laity are growing restless about clerical domination, and that anticlericalism is on the increase. We are informed that unless the Church changes its present stand on birth control, large numbers of people will leave it. We are exhorted to practice "honesty" in ecclesiastical life before it is too late. We are advised that Catholic schools are in "trouble" because of the rapidly growing lay criticism. Clearly, if the commentators are to be believed, we have much to worry about.

It seems to me that these kinds of worries have two things in common. First of all, there is precious little evidence to back any of them up. Secondly, there is not much that can be done about them. They constitute the sort of theoretical and high-level concern that delights the heart of the professional viewers-with-alarm; but, for all their unquestioned merits as conversational

material, they do not indicate any direction that practical policy may take.

I must confess I find myself thinking that these "problems" are not the real ones in American Catholicism. Crises of faith, the quest for honesty, the revolt against silence, complaints about parochial schools, the rise of anticlericalism—these are problems of the very, very few and do not at this time and probably never will affect the American Church to any considerable extent. Indeed, as far as the crisis-of-faith phenomenon goes, I suspect it is probably much less a problem among Catholic intellectuals now than it was twenty years ago.

But lest Mr. John Leo should accuse me of a sunny and trouble-free view of Catholicism, let me affirm that the American Church has immense problems—not the

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Father Greeley is a staff member of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, and lecturer in the University's department of Sociology.

kind that threaten the existence of the Church, but the kind that can greatly impede its work and may cause it to miss many of the golden opportunities of the present age.

These difficulties are much more specific and much more concrete than those presented by the high-level worrier. They are also the sort of thing it is possible to do something about. I trust I have said enough in other writings about the healthy and dynamic state of the American Church to insure that my impressionistic comments about serious problems will not be viewed as either pessimism or despair. Even though simple-minded men like Mr. Leo may not believe it possible, one can be quite optimistic about the health and vitality of the American Church and at the same time feel that the Church has tremendous and almost staggering problems to face.

In any summary catalogue of the challenges faced by the American Church, one must necessarily be concise: the nuances and qualifications this article properly requires would fill a book rather than just a few pages.

BASIC STRUCTURES

The first set of problems are problems of structure. Despite fashionable complaints, the Church is not top-heavy. It is bottom-heavy. My non-Catholic colleagues in social science are constantly astonished by the Church's attempt to direct its many activities with an incredibly small number of administrative and planning personnel. Administrators are terribly overworked; they must make all kinds of decisions that should be delegated to lower-level administrators, and have little time for research and planning about long-range policy. It is even more astonishing that the tremendous organizational revolution launched within the Church by the Second Vatican Council has not as yet led to a notable increase in either the size or the competencies of ecclesiastical staffs. It is a near miracle that the Church, as a human organization, functions and even grows with the present limited staff available to it; but there seems no real reason why this state of affairs should continue.

Again, non-Catholic scholars are astonished that the first tentative beginning of the Center for Applied Research in the

Apostolate represents the only national research and policy-planning body the Church has. If on the local level there is anything similar, its existence is a carefully kept secret. One very prominent ecclesiastic said several years ago that the Catholic Church need not plan for the future but can leave that to the Holy Spirit. There are at least some of us who might think that this attitude was very close to what the moral theology books used to call *tentatio Dei*.

It is of course, possible for staffs to become unwieldy and bureaucratic. But this need not happen, and the present problem in the American Church is not that we have too many people on our staffs, but that we have not nearly enough to handle the complex administrative and planning problems that such a vast and diversified institution must face.

SUBSIDIARY FUNCTION

The second aspect of the structural problem is related to the first. Because the administrative staffs are generally numerically inadequate, administrative decisions must necessarily be made at the top levels. Thus, a bishop and his assistants must supervise an entire diocese—a virtually impossible task in a diocese that has several hundred parishes. Despite all the Church's talk about the principle of subsidiary function, there exists no intermediate bodies between the diocesan curia and the local parish—bodies that could be entrusted with the making of many lesser decisions that need not be referred to the highest authority. Paradoxically, the decentralization of decision-making power actually gives the central institution more power than it had before, because it can then ignore minor problems and concentrate its resources on the truly major questions that face the diocese as a whole. The principle of subsidiary function is not merely an ethically valid principle; it is also one that works in practice, because it increases the administrative efficiency of an institution.

A third structural problem is connected with the second. For many reasons, including lack of viable intermediary bodies, the processes of communication, consultation and information gathering proceed at a very slow rate within the Church. For example, it is difficult for a bishop to know what

his priests and people are thinking, and it is often equally difficult for the people and the priests to understand what the problems of the bishop and his staff are. At this point in the development of the Church's canonical structure, there are no institutionalized channels by which bishops, clergy and people can talk among themselves and share their ideas and problems. While there is a good deal of talk about the establishment of consultative institutions and the development of public opinion within the Church, this talk has in only very few instances been turned into concrete action. The result is that decisions must be made and policies implemented by people who are forced to operate largely in the dark. What is surprising is not that there have been misunderstandings, but that there have not been many more misunderstandings.

It is to be hoped that no one will say the new emphasis on consultation and communication diminishes the authority of the decision-maker. Quite the contrary, a decision-maker who has better means of gathering information from his subordinates will be a stronger and more efficient one.

PERSONNEL PROBLEMS

The second set of problems the Church faces are problems of personnel. Perhaps the most acute of these, at least for the clergy, is to be found in the seniority system, which in many places does not permit a man to assume a position of responsibility until he is relatively far along in years and then keeps him in this position until he is removed by death, even though long before his death his competency may have approached zero. Because of the seniority system and the absence of a retirement policy, some men of undeniable virtue and good will are no longer competent at their jobs, frustrate the work of their subordinates and do serious harm to the institution for which they are responsible.

In the meantime, younger men are kept in a position of dependency, where they are unable to make decisions and cannot achieve any sense of personal security or growth toward maturity. Under such circumstances their decision-making talents atrophy, and when at last they succeed to power and responsibility, they in turn feel threatened

and insecure, and are quite frequently incompetent. Furthermore, at one time the problems of a church and of ecclesiastical administration may have been simple enough for one all-wise and all-knowing Father to make all the necessary decisions. But this time has long since passed. The concentration of all the power and authority in an institution in the hands of one person succeeds only in isolating that person from his subordinates and from the rank and file members of the institution. His position becomes awkward, lonely and virtually untenable. The lonely pastor or the lonely superior, cut off from his assistants and his people, thrust into a job for which he was not trained, and feeling threatened by the fact that his decision-making powers have been stunted, is a sad and indeed pitiable figure. While we may be impatient with the mistakes he makes and dissatisfied with his hesitancy and lack of vision, we cannot help sympathizing with the impossible position he has been placed in.

There are no simple answers to this question of authority and responsibility in the Church. But answers at least can be found, and it ought to be clear that mere longevity is not a sufficient qualification for assuming a decision-making role.

NEED FOR TRAINING

Closely related to the use of authority over ecclesiastical personnel is the problem of training such personnel. There is no need in this article to do more than mention the seminary question, which is currently being discussed on all sides. At least one point, however, ought to be emphasized: in large metropolitan regions, the Church is increasingly engaged in a good deal of "cross cultural" work in communities of poverty and cultural deprivation. It is a grotesque mistake to assume that a middle-class young man or woman who has received no special training for this kind of missionary work can be placed in such a situation and be expected to react in a healthy and intelligent way. No missionary order in the world would make the mistake of sending its personnel to the mission fields without training, and the large archdiocese must face the fact that they are going to be in the missionary business for a long

time to come and must train some of their personnel intensively for this business.

The third set of problems have to do with the "crises of growth" in the Church. Growth situations have immense revolutionary potential. As the historian Crane Brinton has pointed out, revolutions do not occur in times of stagnation; they occur in periods of growth when something or someone causes the growth to slow down or stop. Revolutions, in short, are a failure of safety-valve mechanisms in time of dramatic change. While thus far the American Church has successfully avoided any serious revolutionary crises, one would be naive to think that the danger is not present and will not continue to be present for some time to come. The problem is not so much that the younger clergy and laity and religious will push too far, too fast, but rather that at least some people in positions of responsibility and authority will feel threatened and become panicky as the pace of change accelerates their efforts to "slow things down" or "put the lid back on"; and this could create a far more serious and far more dangerous situation than the one that actually exists.

FORCES UNLEASHED

Part of this problem results from the "cultural lag" that exists among certain leaders within the Church. At least some people in positions of responsibility and authority do not really understand the forces that have been unleashed by the Ecumenical Council and are not in sympathy with them. When faced with subordinates who understand the meaning of the Council and are terribly excited by the *aggiornamento*, those members of the older generation (who are either ill-informed or unsympathetic) find themselves in a position where they can avoid dissension and conflict only with considerable skill. The leader who is shrewd enough politically to trust his followers and to give them as much free rein as he can is much less likely to have difficulty than the suspicious leader who feels afraid and insecure in the face of change he does not understand. A difficulty also exists when a leader has intellectual conviction in support of the *aggiornamento* but lacks the vision or the know-how to im-

plement his conviction. He is sympathetic with change but, because he doesn't know how to activate the sympathy, he insists on going slow.

NEW BREED AND OLD GUARD

The restlessness among the members of the young generation whom I have referred to as the New Breed may aggravate this crisis of growth. Not only are they constantly agitating for change, but they are often doing so in a language and a style that a superior may not understand and that can make him feel more threatened than he already felt. It is my impression that this problem of the New Breed versus the Old Guard may well be more serious in seminaries and in religious communities (particularly of women) than in either dioceses or parishes. As a matter of fact, certain religious orders seem to be on the verge of splitting wide open over the question of modernization. Unless those in positions of responsibility in these situations are extremely sophisticated and mature in dealing with the restlessness within their communities, we may have a fair number of very messy conflicts on our hands. While I find myself troubled by the inflexibility of the demands of some members of the New Breed, I would nevertheless be inclined to say that when the messes eventually develop, they must to some extent be attributed to insensitive, unperceptive and insecure leaders. From the social science point of view, I am compelled to say that social movements (and make no mistake about it, the *aggiornamento* is a real wing-ding of a social movement) cannot be stopped once they have begun. They may be channeled, they may be directed, they may be guided, but attempts to stop them or even to slow them behind their natural pace are usually a sure-fire guarantee of trouble. Movements must move, and the shrewd and sophisticated leader faced with a social movement among his followers quickly takes the advice of the ancient Irish political adage: "If you can't beat them, join them."

The "growth crisis" is also aggravated by the inevitable arrival of a "lunatic fringe." In every transitional situation,

there appear a few unbalanced and immature individuals who do not understand what is going on and adopt extremist poses to demonstrate how "progressive" they are. No particular harm is done by these people so long as they are the only ones who think they are leaders. Those with responsibility, however, occasionally find it difficult to distinguish between the real prophet and the madman. The lunatic fringe is still small within the American Church and probably will be prevented from doing serious harm, but it can still create a good deal of mischief.

ALIENATING THE INTELLIGENTSIA

The Church also has its problems of "lay personnel." For a wide variety of social and historical reasons, the elite members of the laity, especially those who can make some valid claim to be intellectuals, find themselves strongly tempted to alienation from the main body of the Church structure. Their interests, aspirations and goals are so different from those of the ordinary laity (and clergy) that they find much of what goes on in Catholic life quite unacceptable. Such a reaction is understandable and inevitable; the restlessness of the intelligentsia is a strong prod to the Church's institutional conscience and an important source of creative suggestions. But the friction involved in the present uncomfortable relationship between intelligentsia and structure is not without its dangers. Those in positions of responsibility must seek to develop new modes of participation in the life of the Church where the growing lay elite can make its proper contribution. Not to do so might lead to an inexcusable waste of talent and energy.

On the other hand, there is at least some question as to the extent to which alienation is a valid reaction to a difficult situation and the extent to which it is a self-conscious pose that may be preserved long after it has any relationship to reality. Alienation from the ecclesiastical structure and antagonism toward it may often be a means of releasing aggressions (toward father figures) or luxuriating in self-pity. The lay intellectual is often tempted to feel snobbish when he looks at the great un-

washed mass of American Catholics who are not fortunate enough to be as intellectual as he (and then, of course, is further tempted to blame Catholic schools). He is tempted to wonder whether it is not dangerous for him to become too closely associated with the Church structure; for example, John Cogley, normally an extraordinarily balanced and perceptive writer, recently raised a clarion call of warning to his fellow "lay thinkers" about the dangers of being too friendly with bishops. I suppose that there are some dangers involved in "lay thinkers" being friendly with bishops, but it appears to me that it might be more dangerous for the bishops than for the "lay thinkers."

LEGACY OF CLERICALISM

But far more serious than the alienation of the elite is the apathy of the masses, including the "educated" masses. A good deal of the indifference of Catholics to the work of the Church (beyond Sunday Mass, Catholic education, and certain moral restraints) can be attributed to the fact that until very recently lay people could have thought with every justification that the Church was a clerical affair, and that no lay help was wanted or needed. Nevertheless, a tremendous amount of work must be done if the laity are to be persuaded that the Church is theirs and that they must assume responsibility for its work and its goals. In the National Opinion Research Center's study of attitudes toward Catholic schooling, for example, despite the increased lay representation on parochial school boards, we could find no evidence that there was much popular demand for such representation. Only one per cent of the Catholic adult population and only seven per cent of the readers of the *Commonweal* believe that an important improvement in Catholic education would be greater parental participation and administration of the schools. While there are a fair number of "educated" laity who are quite willing to criticize the Church (and especially its education), those who are willing to assume responsibility are still pathetically few. One suspects that, for a long time to come, the major task of the lay apostolate will be to convince the laity that there is one.

At the root of many of the other problems is the lack of theoretical perspectives to enable us to understand the American Catholic phenomenon. One would gather from the almost complete lack of interest in the subject that there is no such thing as a valid history of American Catholicism—at least nothing beyond oversimplified references to “lay trusteeism” and obscure allusions to “Americanism.” While we have a wealth of first-rate Scripture scholars and an increasing number of competent dogmatic theologians, there is yet to evolve an “American school” of theology that would provide the theoretical underpinnings for practical work.

NEW PASTORAL GOALS

Pastoral theology is nonexistent; presumably the old goal of preserving the faith and loyalty of the immigrant is no longer operative, but many of the pastoral techniques still in use are apparently directed toward such goals. We have not even begun to develop a “spirituality of affluence” that would show what the virtue of poverty would look like in a society of permanent prosperity and abundance. Despite all the ferment in the catechetical and liturgical fields, progress toward evolving comprehensive theories in these areas has been very slow, largely because, as one prominent liturgist put it, there is little profound scholarship from which to build theories.

The marriage-education movements, whose approach was so long based on opposition to both family planning and the working wife, and emphasis on the differences between the sexes, now find themselves desperately searching for a new direction. Their tentative probings into crucial problems of the meaning of sexuality and the role of woman in the modern world have not as yet been particularly successful. In the meantime, Pre-Caná Conferences are rapidly falling from favor among the younger generation.

In the absence of competent scholarship and sound theoretical development, that which passes for theory in the American Church is often served by popular journalists who have stepped into the vacuum. No one would deny the immense contribu-

tion these men have made, but it is to be hoped that the era will soon come to an end when they are the only ones contributing theory for the American Church.

Not the least important theoretical debate is that raging about use of freedom and authority. It often seems that at least some of the advocates of freedom feel that freedom means an absence of rules and regulations, while some of the defenders of authority apparently argue that rules and regulations are necessary to create virtue. Perhaps both sides fail to understand the nature of law and the nature of virtue. The purpose of law is to create and maintain external order to promote the common good, to prevent one man or a group of men from interfering with the right to freedom of another man or group of men. But law cannot create virtue; it can only produce a climate where virtue is possible. Virtue results from the repetition of free human acts and cannot be compelled by law or constrained by force. Spirituality cannot be developed by the drill method formerly used in teaching the multiplication tables.

VIRTUE BY COMPULSION

Pressures, either crude or sophisticated, to obtain conformity do not produce either virtue or freedom. Thus, for example, the practice so prevalent in many parishes of forcing children to go to Mass every day or to confession every Thursday before First Friday are intolerable abuses of human freedom and a poor substitute for development of conviction and virtue. But such practices enable pastors to feel they are developing “good habits” in children. It is astonishing that generations of experience with the disappearance of these good habits have not persuaded anyone of the utter folly of virtue by compulsion.

Similarly, the practice in certain inner-city mission parishes of compelling parents to come to inquiry classes and to go to Sunday Mass if they wish their children to enter Catholic schools seems quite inexcusable, no matter how effective it is as a means of making converts. Many of those who are most restless in demanding freedom in the Church are apparently not willing to concede this freedom to others, once they

themselves have positions of responsibility.

Freedom implies respect for the dignity, the uniqueness, the privacy of each human being. It is the right of every human personality to grow at its own pace and in its own direction, according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (so long as this growth does not interfere with the rights of someone else). Until full recognition of this right is widespread in the Church, we shall continue to face the problem of the charismatic innovator who, once his movement becomes established, draws up a rigorous party line that the rank and file must follow or risk expulsion. It is always easy to talk, however, about how other people abuse our freedom and to ignore the abuses of freedom that we ourselves are guilty of.

Certain other problems should be mentioned in passing. It would seem, first of all, that we might be able to learn much from our Jewish brothers about fund-raising and financial problems. There is reason to think that the increasing affluence of the Catholic population is not reflected in the financial condition of the Church; the reason for this might not be so much that people are less generous, but that the Church's fund-raising has not kept pace with the change in the population.

The problem of religious and priestly vocations is apparently growing more serious. For many reasons (not unconnected with matters already discussed in this article), the religious and priestly life does not attract as many of the best young people in the country as it did a generation ago.

The inner city apostolate in the large dioceses is in considerable trouble as the younger generation begins to question seriously the assumptions of the Young Turks of a generation ago about the role of the Church in the inner city. Although volunteer programs such as Extension, PAVLA and CALM are a step in the right direction, we still have not found the kind of youth movement that seriously challenges the enthusiasm and dedication of the most talented young people from the high schools and colleges.

Finally, there is the secret problem about which nobody speaks, the problem of the ethnic groups. One Protestant summed this problem up beautifully when he said: "Long after the ecumenical movement has solved the difficulties separating Protestants and Catholics, it will still be struggling with the tensions that separate Irish Catholics and Polish Catholics."

The litany of problems in this article is a long one. If none of them is insoluble, neither does any of them admit of an easy solution. While one can be very optimistic about the future of the American Church, there would hardly be any justification for beginning a new cult of St. Pollyanna. The problems we face are serious—in some instances terribly serious. They are serious not because they threaten American Catholicism with major destruction, but because they present a kind of impediment that could seriously weaken the Church's impact during perhaps the most exciting period in its whole history.

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(Oct. 1963 through Aug-Sept. 1965)

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The Permanent Revolution

The Bible is the foundation document of the Christian revolution, and I do not use the word revolution carelessly. Only a close study of the history of the Church discloses what a revolutionary force she has been. But the explosive force of all revolutions is softened in the course of time, and the revolution itself becomes a new basis for conventionality. The Christian revolution is a permanent revolution; by its nature it is incapable of turning into an establishment. For it calls for an unending scrutiny of the human heart, of human actions and institutions. It lives in a world which is not yet effectively redeemed, and there lies its work. Its mission is to establish the reign of God, and this is a more profound revolution than any known to political history. It is the inbreak of God in his saving acts and in his judgments. If the Church is anything less, it is not fulfilling its mission. The challenge of the Bible is a challenge to keep the revolution permanent.

The Bible is the foundation document of the Christian revolution and the permanently valid and contemporary challenge because it is the word of God. In using this traditional phrase, it is important that we understand what it means. The New Testament preserves the apostolic proclamation of the Gospel. In the apostolic proclamation the apostles believed that those who heard the proclamation encountered Jesus himself. The apostles were merely witnesses; the reality of him whom they proclaimed was what gave power to their words. It was the reality of Jesus which elicited faith and which commanded a decision.

The word of God is not just a record of the life of Christ and an unsynthesized summary of the beliefs of primitive Christians. It is one of the ways in which the Church is one with the living Christ, and one of the ways in which the Christian encounters Christ. Some of the Fathers of the Church employed the analogy of the sacraments to describe the presence of Christ in the Bible. In our modern and more complex theology the analogy is not without danger, but it is still valid. At least it keeps us from thinking of the Bible as no more than a theological source or a quarry of proof-texts.

The Bible is a challenge and a constant challenge; and it will do us good to think of it in these terms. A challenge, to repeat, is a call to action; and the challenge of the Bible is uttered to the Church and to each member of the Church. Each of us can know what his own response to the challenge is, and that response we can control. But we respond to the challenge as members of the Church, and we cannot be indifferent to the response of the whole Church and of others. We must not only meet our personal challenge, but we must make our response effective within the Church. For our life in Christ is one.

"The Challenge of the Bible."
John L. McKenzie, S.J.
The Critic; Aug.-Sept. 1965

Books Received

Sin, Liberty and Law
Louis Monden, S.J.
Sheed and Ward. \$3.95

It is easy to be enthusiastic about this book; it deserves and will have a wide, favorable reception. The author is deeply read in traditional Catholic morality, but he is equally at home with those who are making a fresh approach to contemporary moral problems. He analyzes the theories proposed by psychologists, those who favor situation ethics and those who have developed a mysticism of sin. He sees not merely the errors in these approaches but their valid contributions which Christians can and should incorporate into their Christian life.

Father Monden is a distinguished figure at Louvain, greatly respected for his work in theology, psychology and religion. In a volume just short of two hundred pages, he manages to combine a remarkable digest of the best from the past with the current thinking of our day both within and outside the Church. And whether he treats of topics like sin, confession, Christian commitment or growth — he does so with a rare sympathy for pastoral practice and the problems of contemporary Christians.

While thoroughly aware of the evils of our day, he is also convinced that "the sense of sin has not vanished but has undergone a considerable change . . . not a phenomenon of decay but of maturation." And this realistic note of Christian optimism he supports with learning and clear, graceful expression. A word of congratulation is also merited for the excellent translation by Joseph Donceel, S.J.

A Key to the Parables
Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P.
Paulist Press. 95c.

Father Harrington is an Irish Domini-

can scripture scholar, thoroughly versed in modern biblical research. In addition, he has a sympathetic concern for the religious needs of contemporary people and the talent to translate for them the riches of God's word. All this was amply demonstrated in his previous *Deus Book*, "Explaining the Gospels". His latest book on the parables is no less valuable.

The first section discusses the nature of the parable as a form of expression and its over-all function. The author here treats the twofold setting of the parables: how they were employed in the ministry of Christ and how they were developed later in the ministry of the early Church. By examining the Church's use of the parables in her catechesis—in the setting of an individual gospel and by comparison with the different gospel accounts — we can discern their meaning when first enunciated by our Lord. The method of form-criticism is applied to selected parables, with judicious use of the best insights of scholars like C. H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias.

The second section of this volume is concerned with the parables employed in St. Luke's Gospel. An invaluable presentation of St. Luke's theology is constructed through his account of the parables on the Kingdom, commitment to God's Word, Divine Mercy — along with the response and witness of those who become Christ's disciples.

This book is warmly recommended to all catechists, preachers, study clubs and individuals who wish to improve their grasp of the New Testament content.

Saints: Their Place
in the Church
Paul Molinari, S.J.
Sheed and Ward. \$5.50

A sharp-tongued critic of Catholicism once charged that in the Church, "even the saints are subsidized." Many sympathetic

non-Catholics, devoid of prejudice, certainly find it difficult to make head or tail of our cult of the saints. And even among Catholics, aside from those who practically ignore the members of the Church in heaven, there are many who would either cut down devotion to a bloodless minimum or those who go to disgraceful excess.

Father Molinari's book is an informed and balanced discussion of a topic which reaches into theology, ascetics, apologetics and liturgy. In it he shows how the Church's actual teaching and approved practice springs from the rich soil of the Christian mystery and authentic Christian vitality. Holding a middle course between neglect and excess, the writer displays the valid claim Christ's heroes have upon our devotion, imitation and affection.

The writer is uniquely qualified to treat this subject. He served as a peritus at Vatican II. He was also secretary to the special commission which helped to write the classic seventh chapter of the Constitution on the Church: "The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and its Union with the Church in Heaven." He also gained exceptional competence in his office as postulator of the causes of some proposed for canonization.

This volume has already appeared in Italian, German and Spanish editions. It might well serve as background reading to the sections of the various documents of Vatican II which treat of the rightful position of the saints in the Christian life.

Recent Publications for the Mission Shelf

The document on the Missions issued by Vatican II was one which had anything but a serene journey. One series of propositions, despite papal commendation, was rejected. The next schema felt the influence of entrenched authority. But all in all, many were happy at the final draft, and its directives emerge as the result of honest soul-searching and a large measure of open discussion.

Meanwhile many excellent books have become available, testifying to a resurgence of mission thinking and activity. The various volumes of the *Concilium* series of the Paulist Press make a notable contribution.

This is particularly the case with papers such as that in Vol. 4, "Mission: Obstacle or Stimulus to Ecumenism," by M. J. Le Guillou, O.P.

In *Christian Corridors to Japan* by Joseph J. Spae, C.I.C.M., Ph.D., we have a model study for the evangelization of a non-Christian nation. It represents vast practical experience combined with Catholic and non-Catholic research in theology, sociology and anthropology. This is a pioneer work which may set the pace for similar studies in other mission fields.

The Maryknollers are well represented in this growing mission literature. Valuable from various aspects is *The Whole World is My Neighbor* by veteran missionary, Bernard F. Meyer, M.M.; *The Modern Mission Apostolate*, edited by William J. Richardson, M.M., (a symposium of the best insights gleaned from the Maryknoll Missioners Conference held in 1963); and *A World to Win* by Joseph A. Grassi, M.M. All contain invaluable information.

J.T.M.

GUIDE

- A publication of the Paulist Institute for Religious Research.
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GUIDE

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Guide Lights

ABOUT LAY CATECHISTS . . .

In these discussions about a parish catechumenate, the inclusion of lay catechists or co-instructors has been insisted upon for several reasons. Certainly, Vatican II has given renewed attention to the Catholic laos and this means that many of our structures will have to be adjusted accordingly. It should go without saying that a 'new' institution such as the parish catechumenate we are contemplating must give generous room for lay participation. But there are other reasons, too, which call for such integration and they are even more basic.

THE BASIC RATIONALE . . .

First off, let's dispose of the notion that we are concerned with developing this role of the laity only because we are in the 'age of the layman.' That is cart-before-horse thinking. We don't want to find things for lay people to do simply because they may get uneasy and insecure about being left out of new developments in the Church. It is much closer to the mark to say that we are concerned about discovering a meaningful role for the layman in the catechumenate because we believe that the very nature of the process of conversion demands his presence. This is only another way of saying that the preaching of the Gospel cannot be separated from the Church which does the preaching, and that the Church is unrecognizable as such without the laity.

THEY SHALL BE WITNESSES . . .

In the history of salvation the teaching of Christ is inseparable from the person of Christ. Today, and always, the Gospel of Christ is unthinkable apart from the Church of Christ that proclaims it. In God's design, Christianity is always communicated through some kind of witness. Even in the Old Testament His revelation to Moses was led to a burning bush. Therefore it is of prime importance for the man facing the

Church to see as much of the Church as possible.

This is not to say that the Church has just discovered this truth. The priest, the nun, and the dedicated lay teacher of religion have always performed this role of witness to the truth they were proclaiming, and the Church has always insisted upon sanctity in her teachers for this very reason. However, today we are aware of the need for a broader witness. There are several reasons why this is necessary. In the eyes of the world, the priest, the nun and the teacher appear as professionals in religion, a stereotype which obscures their true quality of witness to the living reality of which they are a part. In this situation they cannot be a gateway to the *mystery* of Christ simply because they are explicable in ordinary human terms. But a lay person is not so easily explained. He belongs to the same human category as the non-believer and yet there is something about him that is different. When the non-believer is confronted with this kind of witness, he is teased for an explanation. Actually, he won't find one for a long time, but the question thrown at him turns him in a new direction and prepares him for that initiation into the Christian mystery which is essential for conversion.

DECLINE OF INSTITUTIONAL WITNESS . . .

Another reason behind the need for active lay witness today is the fact that over the centuries the witness value of Church institutions has declined. Without going into this troubling development, I would just like to point out that in an earlier age when the institutional life of the Church was still close to the divine reality it was created to express, many of the externals of the Church gave strong supporting witness to what the Church believed. Monasticism is one great example. In the patristic age just visiting a monastery would convey a good deal of the spirit of Christianity to a non-believer. However, much has happened in the interim and I doubt that this would be the case today. It is not that monasticism is no longer Christian, but that externals of monastic life no longer express as clearly

the truth they were established to convey. Times have changed and it would now require some supplementary explanation to connect the two. The same is true about many facets of parish life. Since so many of our ecclesiastical institutions have come adrift from the founts of their original vitality, the need for personal witness is all the more urgent. It was always the principal type of witness but, previously when it failed, as it will, the institutional side of the Church was vigorous enough to take up the slack. However, the modern world does not see any necessary connection between the teaching of the Church and her institutions. Yet the identity of the Church and her message must be made known if men are to believe. Some other aspect of the Church, then, has to be pushed up front so that the world can see this connection between Church and Church teaching. The laity can do this. They are as important an aspect of the Church as any. In addition, they give witness to the truth in a personal and quite recognizable way. This is always effective, but it has even stronger appeal today to a society that is enveloped in a de-personalized technology. That is why today the Church instinctively looks to the layman to fulfill the role of witness in a massive way.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY . .

Now, a word about the subject of Christian witness. Our testimony concerns the risen Christ. He is the ultimate fact to whom we call the world's attention. We are witnesses of all that God has accomplished in his plan of salvation, it is true, but the entire plan is summed up in the risen Christ in whom we see the fulfillment as well as the design of God's love. To make this risen Christ palpable to men is the purpose of Christian witness. In the person of the Christian believer, the non-believer is confronted with salvation as a *fact* of his experience. The power of the risen Christ has come into this human being before him and has done something to him that makes him different. This thing these Christians call 'salvation' is what has happened to him, and while the exact change it has brought about cannot be described, the world senses he is different. This is the introduction to the Christian mystery mentioned above.

The true lay catechist is a personal sign of God's saving action. He is also a sign of man's response to the divine call. In his person he sums up for the non-believer before him what God promises and expects. In his catechetical work he tries to communicate the content of this promise and

expectation to his fellow man. The particular tasks he performs are unimportant. It is his Christian presence and devoted charity that count, for they make the Church palpable and believable to his charges.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN WITNESS

When we understand what it is that a Christian witness does, then it becomes evident that the essential qualities of the catechist are not so much knowledge and teaching skill, as deep and abiding faith and charity. He gives testimony of Christ, and to do this convincingly he must have experienced Christ. We don't experience Christ the way the Apostles did, but we do experience him in the Church, and it is this experience that makes our testimony credible. A person who has not really experienced Christ in his life, a Catholic who is lukewarm and disinterested, makes a bad witness on this account. On the other hand, the deeply committed Catholic who, (like St. Paul), lives and breathes Christ, makes a very effective witness. That is why the Church stresses the need for spiritual formation and prayer in her priests and catechists. Some teaching skill and understanding are desirable, but the truly essential preparation for catechists is prayer, the sacraments, and reading of the Scriptures. It is in these activities that we come in contact with the risen Christ and experience his power in our lives, and this is the subject of our testimony.

PROBLEMS OF WITNESSES . . .

At this point in the history of the Church there is some confusion and uncertainty over the exact contribution and office of the layman in the Church. This is only natural in a time of transition. Some of this uncertainty spills over into the catechetical role of a co-instructor in the parish. In trying to clarify things it is much better to concentrate on the general role of being a Christian witness than to make it a matter of job description. The former is an enduring task which if rightly performed will produce good fruit no matter what the job alignment. The latter can be helpful but by itself will accomplish little no matter how efficient. In training laity for their role in the catechumenate, I would concentrate on general Christian formation in a biblical and liturgical way and give second place to the more particularized training in methods and content. As the catechumenate takes form in each parish and specific functions are allocated to lay catechists, they can then receive further specialized on-the-job training and preparation as needed.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.

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